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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 003292

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2017
TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM EG SU
SUBJECT: SUDAN: CAIRO-BASED OPPOSITION LEADERS MAHDI,
MIRGHANI REQUEST NEW APPROACH

REF: A. CAIRO 2560
¶B. KHARTOUM 1164
¶C. CAIRO 2109
¶D. CAIRO 1443

Classified by Minister Counselor for Economic and Political
Affairs William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In separate Cairo meetings with Sudanese
opposition figures Mohamed Osman Al Mirghani and Sadiq Al
Mahdi, both emphasized that current USG efforts on Sudanese
unity are overly-focused on the National Congress Party (NCP)
and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), leaving
out opposition groups such as Al Mirghani's Democratic
Unionist Party (DUP) and Al Mahdi's Umma Party. Their
analyses of Sudan's problems are based on long personal
histories in that country, but also seemed angled to propel
themselves, and their movements, back to political relevancy.
 End summary.

Mirghani

¶2. (C) On November 19, we met with Cairo-based exiled
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) chief, National Democratic
Alliance (NDA) head, and spiritual leader of the Khatimyn
Sufi Order, Mohamed Osman Al Mirghani. Al Mirghani thanked
us for the "constructive" U.S. role in Sudan, but said that
the situation has devolved into "totalitarian regimes" in
both the north and south, as represented by the National
Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudanese People's Liberation
Movement (SPLM). The DUP represents a democratic and popular
alternative, he said, highlighting what he considers to be
long-standing DUP acceptance and inclusion of Christians. He
also claimed that the DUP consistently received the most
votes in Sudanese elections. We emphasized that the U.S. is
working to support the Sudanese people as they strive to
maintain a unified Sudan based on democratic principles.

¶3. (C) Al Mirghani complained that, while he had met with
former Secretary of State Powell in November 2004, President
Bush has only been willing to meet Sudanese who are "black
and Christian." Mirghani contended that President Bush
should consult equally with all Sudanese leaders, be they
Arab or African, Christian or Muslim.

¶4. (SBU) On Darfur, Al Mirghani claimed strong ties to "all
the parties" and that he consistently meets with them to push
for unity. He discussed again the DUP strategy on Darfur,
focusing on wealth- and power-sharing principles with the DPA
as a starting-point (ref D).

Mahdi

¶5. (C) In a separate late October meeting, Sadiq Al Mahdi,

head of the Sudanese opposition National Umma Party, Imam of
the Ansar, and former prime minister of Sudan, outlined his
vision for a new, "comprehensive" approach towards peace in
Sudan. Reiterating statements often made to USG officials
(refs B and C), Al Mahdi explained that the three peace
agreements for the south, Darfur, and east are all "fragile"
because they dealt only with bilateral issues between the
local rebelling party and the ruling NCP, to the exclusion of
other regions of Sudan and the opposition parties. Now, with
continued strife in Darfur and the SPLM withdrawal from the
government, "we are facing that fragility." All three
agreements are bound to fail unless a comprehensive approach
is taken across Sudan as a whole, he continued, but warned
that the NCP gains from the current approach because they can
better protect their position of power.

¶6. (C) Al Mahdi advocated a charter, in which all Sudanese
groups except the NCP would participate in formulating; they
would then present such a charter to the NCP. If the NCP
agrees, great; if not, "there will be a popular uprising to
force them out." Although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement
(CPA) has the right "building blocks," he said that some
points must be clarified and contradictions ironed-out,
protocols on religious relations, culture, accountability,
and foreign policy must be added, and the phrase "the two
parties" (read: the NCP and SPLM) must be changed to read
"all parties." He asked for USG and international support on
this idea.

¶7. (C) Al Mahdi acknowledged that his vision departs
significantly from current U.S. policy of supporting the CPA
and the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), but argued that current
U.S. policy is not based on a "proper diagnosis" of the
problem. Nevertheless, Al Mahdi praised strong USG support

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for Sudan over recent years, and the efforts of Special Envoy
Natsios and Khartoum Charge Fernandez in particular.

Comment

¶8. (C) Both Al Mirghani and Al Mahdi have analyses of Sudan's
problems based on long, personal histories and deep knowledge
of the country. However, both seemed to be angling for any
support they can muster to propel them back into relevancy in
a political environment that seems to have shut them out.
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